

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING

Saturday, July 20, 2002 9:00 A.M.

North Platte, Nebraska

APPROVED

Call to Order and Introductions: Barbara Walker, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:29, due to the need for the hotel to make it possible to use a telephone in the meeting room as had been arranged. Since, due to health reasons, Jan Ludwig was unable to attend the meeting, Sheila Gawrych from the Kearney Office would be taking minutes.

All wished Jan well and welcomed Sheila.

Commissioners present were: Barbara Walker, Lincoln; Bill Orester, Lincoln; Dorothy Westin-Yockey, South Sioux City; Bob Burns, Omaha; and Nichelle Ferreyra, Scottsbluff, via Telephone Conference. Commission staff in attendance were: Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Candace Laursen, North Platte District Supervisor, North Platte; Lin Miller, Rehabilitation Counselor, North Platte; Sheila Gawrych, Staff Assistant, Kearney. Others introduced as members of the public were: Colleen Chandler, North Platte; Joe Larreau, Hershey; Florence Lunkwitz, Sutherland; Berdene Thorpe, Sutherland; Loy Shepherd, North Platte; Wilma Buckley, North Platte; Carolyn Ross, North Platte; Mildred Jones, North Platte; Evelyn Haines, Lincoln; Fritz Yockey, South Sioux City; Della Johnston, North Platte; Leland Larreau, Hershey; Jaimeson Meza, North Platte; Devine Meza, North Platte.

Announcement Concerning Public Comments: Walker encouraged attendees to participate in the meeting.

She let them know that there was a place in the agenda for public comment, but invited them to, at any time during the meeting, address the Chair and identify themselves. Time permitting, they would be allowed to comment.

Minutes of the March 23, 2002 Meeting: Walker requested action on the minutes of the March 23, 2002 meeting. Burns moved the minutes be accepted. Orester seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The minutes were approved.

Minutes of the May 6, 2002 Meeting: Walker requested action on the minutes of the May 6, 2002 meeting. Orester moved the minutes be accepted. Burns seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The minutes were approved.

Minutes of the June 10, 2002 Meeting: Walker requested action on the minutes of the June 10, 2002 meeting. Orester moved the minutes be accepted. Burns seconded the motion. In discussion, Walker recommended to add to the minutes the decision to gather and create a questionnaire for further clarification to go to staff with the evaluation of the Executive Director. Also to be added to the minutes was the decision to arrange a meeting time with staff in order for the Board and staff to get to know one another and interact together. Orester moved the minutes be approved as amended. Burns seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The minutes were approved as amended.

Report From the Chairman: Walker publicly commended Candy Laursen as Supervisor of the Year and Dottie Wilmott as Staff Person of the Year. She also expressed appreciation for the time and effort of staff. She publicly commended Shane Buresh for all his time and effort to get the bus shelter by the Commission office in Lincoln. Another legislative special session will begin on July 30th.

Walker encouraged talking with legislators to let them know our unique situation in needing to be fully funded in order to get the Federal match. In June, Gerri Harris from the regional office in Kansas City looked at Transition programs. Walker met with Harris, Van Zandt, Carlos Servan, and Bob Deaton. Concern was expressed that information that comes from their office is in print instead of electronic form. Harris said that was an oversight on their part and that they'll work to get information into electronic form. Walker thanked Pearl for setting the meeting up. Orestor moved the Chair's report be approved. Westin-Yockey seconded. The vote was unanimous. The report was approved. Orestor recognized Walker for her work as chairman. Walker commended Van Zandt for all her hard work and dedication.

Report From the Executive Director: The Public Hearings on Rule were held on May 6. Within the following two weeks, the documents were finalized, put together, and sent to the Attorney General and Secretary of State. After their approval, they will go to the Governor. Pearl publicly commended Jan Ludwig for all her hard work on Rule. Van Zandt reported on various grants. Gerri Harris was particularly impressed with the transition program. In the future, Dr. Van Zandt would like to set up a conference call so Board members can converse with RSA Representatives who come to the agency. A grant application for a diabetic education project has been submitted to the HHS Cash Fund. We will know this fall whether it is funded. We obtained approval from the In-Service Training grant source to amend the grant to use funds for the Nebraska Center for the Blind video, to be used with new staff, potential employees, and training in the field with staff and clients. Fatos Floyd and Pearl met with the production company, Taylor Productions, in Lincoln. A committee (Fatos Floyd, Shane Buresh, Jeff Altman, Bob Deaton) will meet in August.

BEP: in a recent state audit, it was recommended that the Commission needs to have more accurate documentation from vendors about monthly proceeds and what they pay to the Commission. A more systematic approach for documentation was discussed at the June 14 Blind Vendors' Committee meeting. The Commission also needs to review annual set-aside that vendors pay to the Commission.

The set-aside was reviewed at the June Blind Vendors' meeting. It was decided to leave the set-aside at 12 percent. The Commission was audited in March. For the most part things were in good shape as a new entity. Concerns: Business Enterprises (mentioned above); payment for "activities" (provided response quoting the law, regulations, and our philosophical and programmatic approach--such events are not recreation, but are for training and confidence building). Pearl wrote to RSA Regional Commissioner, Doug Burleigh, who responded supporting what we do, citing specific law and regulations again. The reply was sent on to the State Auditor and the Attorney General. We will go to the National Office of RSA if there are further questions. Dr. Van Zandt talked about the success of Center Training students. A Technology Fair, co-sponsored by Pat Fischer of F1-Key, is scheduled for August 7 and 8 in conjunction with a College Prep Workshop on August 8 and 9 in Lincoln. A Management Retreat in August will include goal setting for the agency, budget, strategizing and management issues. Home Teaching Plus will take place in North Platte in mid-September. Staff Appreciation Day is September 20. Training issues for board members: ideas are welcome. Standards and indicators: Government tracks where we are as to what is expected toward achieving goals. We passed all of our indicators. There was discussion about secondary disabilities. Pearl will get exact statistics and send to the Board. It was suggested this would be a good thing to put on the agency Web site. Joe Larreau commended the Center for doing a wonderful job taking care of his secondary disabilities during his training. Westin-Yockey moved the Executive Director's report be approved. Orester seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous. The Executive Director's report was approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Materials Update: Walker stated she wants the Board to continue receiving materials from the Commission on an ongoing basis. Walker commended Cheryl Poff for heightening awareness of deaf-blindness through the trivia questionnaire about Helen Keller and through her efforts in getting a proclamation in Nebraska for June as Deaf/Blind Awareness Month. Walker noted staff changes--Dave Robinson's position upgraded to Personnel Officer and Jim Portillo's going to Washington state.

The Board continues to get Center evaluations. Other subjects about which materials were received which prompted discussion include: training workshop on Residential Training Centers for the Blind in November, Consumer Price Index and re-allotment, one-stops set up by the State Workforce Investment Board.

10:43-11:02, Break.

Budget Update: Basic Support on target. Okay with match. Update of Older Blind program, transition program, supported employment, Independent Living, Social Security reimbursements, and Vocational Rehabilitation. Possible avenues for cuts were discussed.

Walker raised the issue of breaking for lunch. Orestor moved to keep going and the decision was made to do so.

Web site Update: Analysis of statistics from Web server for the month of June 1 to July 1 showed 1,076 successful requests (hits); average per day, 36. We're working on having Spanish text translation up soon. Mailing list within NCBVI: need to get better about sending out announcements. Currently, we have 7 people on the list.

Friends of the Commission Update: Pearl spoke with Mike Floyd. Friends now has tax exempt status. Tax-deductible donations are welcome. It is currently considered to be a public entity, but will be reassessed in 2007. There was discussion concerning possible ways to encourage donations to Friends on the Web Site. Pearl will check into that.

Public Comment: Della Johnston asked about when more would be known about the transportation grant. Orestor said they are having a meeting on August 10 th to go through the entire program in order to determine next steps. Concern was expressed about the need to look at long distance transportation, not just within communities/towns but from town to town and across the state.

NEW BUSINESS

Executive Director's Evaluation: June meeting--would like to expand on the kind of input received from staff. One way is to have a questionnaire that would go along with the evaluation that would expand on the areas evaluated to solicit examples. Burns will come up with a questionnaire to elicit more information and will send the first draft to the Commissioners so that by the next meeting they can have something to put into place. There was discussion about anonymity of comments. It was suggested that an E-mail account as guest could be set up. Pearl will look into the specifics of this.

Commission Goals: Walker asked if it is reasonable to have Commission goals for this year before the next Board meeting. Pearl said setting those is part of the purpose of the upcoming Management Retreat.

Commission Board and Staff Meeting: It was suggested that this could be coordinated with a State Staff Meeting. Options were discussed. Either the week of October 14 or 23 is a possibility. The Board will be present on the opening day and would be welcome to remain for the entire meeting.

Concern about Minutes: Concern has been raised about whether or not Board minutes contain enough detail.

Discussion included the Board's wish both to inform and to encourage participation in meetings. It also wants staff support not to replicate what is available on tapes. It was suggested to always mention in the draft minutes that tapes are available, so anyone wanting more detailed information, could request tapes. Things recorded in the minutes: motions or decisions, specific topics discussed, policy changes, commitments people make for next meeting, things historically necessary. Burns moved the minutes continue as they are now, with the exception that when a Commission person makes a report, it be in written form, and accompany the presentation to attach to minutes. Orestor seconded the motion. Walker suggested that this not be limited to Commission staff reports, but that all presentations be handled this way. Pearl asked for clarification as she reports every time. Burns moved that the Executive Director and Chair submit outlines of topics covered in their reports to attach to minutes, and that presenters have a written document to attach to the minutes. The vote was unanimous. The motion was approved.

Focus Packet: There was discussion of whether to create a packet for new Board members or cycle presentations/reports. Consensus was to do some of both. Pearl will talk to staff about having reports available ahead of time so the Board could read them, formulate questions and get right to specific points. Pearl will get input from administration about potential topics to discuss with the Board and will present those next time. Pearl will ask those who have already made presentations to put them in writing if they haven't already done so. Discussion of topics for future presentations included: vending, multi-disabled, informed choice, self-employment, and supported employment. For the next meeting, there was 1 vote for BEP and 3 votes for informed choice. It was decided to focus on informed choice next, and then do BEP at the following meeting.

Location, Date, and Time of Next Meeting: The next meeting was set for 9:00 A.M., Nov. 9, 2002, in Omaha.

Officer elections: Burns nominated Walker for Chairman. Orestor conducted that election. Walker was elected unanimously. Burns nominated Orestor for Vice Chairman. He was elected unanimously. Westin-Yockey nominated Burns for Executive Session Secretary. He was elected unanimously.

Walker thanked all who had attended the meeting for their input.

Adjourn: Westin-Yockey moved, and Burns seconded, to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Gawrych

Staff Assistant, NCBVI Kearney Office

Barbara Walker, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners